

# MAKING THE RIGHTEOUS SAD

*Dinsdale T. Young*

*With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad (Ezekiel 13:22).*

Making the righteous sad! - That is a severe indictment. It was brought by God, and was addressed to the false prophets, and especially to the lying prophetess, who exercised their evil ministry in the days of Ezekiel. In holy wrath, the Lord hurls this flaming impeachment upon these cruel and deceitful ministrants.

We are here introduced to sad people. They were righteous - God declares them such. But they were full of grief. Grief and righteousness are often associated. But the sadness of these grieved ones was not imposed by God. He recognises the sorrow, but disavows it. "I have not made them sad" is His express word of repudiation.

Sometimes sadness is from God. He doth not willingly grieve the children of men (Lamentations 3:33). Especially reluctant is He to grieve those who are covenanted unto Him. But anon He does it. Sadness is one of God's methods of education for His righteous ones. "Thou didst it" (Psalm 39:9) the saddened righteous can confidently and resignedly say in certain of life's calamitous hours.

Let all the sad inquire whence cometh their sadness. From what fountain does the dark and turbid stream arise? It may spring from yourself. Has some strong besetting sin wrecked your gladness? Sadness often originates in temperament. Do not blame God if you are melancholic; blame your yielding to your temperament. Grace can enable a man to rise above his temperament. If self makes a man presumptuous, it full as often makes him despondent. The worry of these worrying days frequently issues in sadness. O righteous one! Thy sadness is not the frown of thy God. Thou art cumbered with much serving. The pace of life is exhausting thee. God has not made you sad. Nerve and body and brain are overwrought.

Sadness is wrought, all too often, by our fellow men. Why are you sad? "An enemy hath done this." An ingrate friend is responsible. A prodigal child. A remorseless creditor. A thankless debtor. Oh, the inhumanity of humanity! Charge not God foolishly because of sadness. Asperse not the kind Lord. Satan often seeks to ruin us by sadness. Quite as often as by pleasure he seeks to spoil us by grief. Sadness is one of the fiercest of his "fiery darts." Beware of Giant Despair, O pilgrim.

I am sure we far too often charge God with our sadness. It is well we should weigh this ancient disclaimer of His: "Whom I have not made sad." Trace your sadness to its true source. It may be that God has done it. But it may be He is in no wise responsible. Some impose sadness upon the righteous in God's name. That is exactly what these false prophetesses did. The Almighty charges them with the high crime. He says, "Ye have made the heart of the righteous sad." They had spoken in Jehovah's name. They professed to be His forthtellers, but they lied. They spake "out of their own hearts." What awful things have been done in God's name! Men have stolen the livery of heaven to serve the devil in. In the name of God mankind has accomplished its worst infamies. Men have lied and persecuted and slain, claiming the while that they thereby fulfilled the counsel of God. Let us see if this wrong-doing is not perpetrated even in our time.

Do not some confound religion and sadness? Assuredly they do. But, thank God, they are not synonymous. Religion and seriousness are essentially allied, but not so religion and sadness. "Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him" (Isaiah 3:10). The work of righteousness is not sadness, but peace and assurance. Do not measure the depth of a man's piety by the length of his face. Sadness is far oftener the consequence of a disordered liver than of a righteous heart.

Beware, above all things, of prophet or prophetess representing righteousness as essential sadness! Here is a great test of a ministry. Is it generally saddening to the righteous? Then it is undivine. They are no true prophets who make the heart of the righteous sad. Sadden the evil-doer by all means. Make him to pierce himself through with many sorrows. But do not sadden the righteous.

God never discourages the righteous. He is “the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3). He ministers every form of legitimate encouragement. God is the supreme Encourager. Fellow servant of God, is yours a saddening ministry to the saint? Then there is surely a grave wrongness in it. Let all whose ideal and endeavour it is to be righteous be of good cheer. Refuse to be loaded with sadness in God’s name. “Be glad in the Lord, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart” (Psalm 32:11).

How had these godless prophetesses accomplished their begloomed ministry? The Lord supplies the answer, and in no measured terms: “with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad.” They had uttered false predictions of calamities which were to descend upon the godly. False teaching usually has a saddening effect upon the righteous. Truth sometimes makes God’s people sad, but it is not intended to do so. But “lies” palmed off as religious truth make the heart of the righteous sad. They often encourage and delight the evil-doer. They give him warrant to take his licence. Today, as in days past, we can readily see false teaching working upon the righteous its unkindly work. This is true of teaching which is intrinsically false.

Inveracious theologies sadden the righteous. What evil presentations we sometimes hear and read! God is represented now as a despot, and now as morally indifferent. A false theology makes the heart of the righteous sad. Has not erroneous teaching concerning the Bible the same effect? If its inspiration were the dubious thing it is sometimes declared to be, it would indeed be a miserable estate in which the righteous are found. When the Word of God is described as a farrago of myths and legends and forgeries, is not the heart of the righteous sad? False teaching regarding the atonement works kindred sorrow. Paul said, “We joy in God, by whom we have received the atonement” (Romans 5:11). Destroy that cardinal truth, and you make the heart of the righteous sad. Resolve the death of Christ into a martyrdom, an ethical example, the supreme historic instance of altruism, and you dry up the freshest spring of gladness which humanity knows.

Preach the doleful tidings that our moral chains must weight us long as we live beneath. And by such erroneous teaching the heart of the righteous is fatally saddened. Proclaim that there is no privilege of assurance for God’s children. And again you plunge the righteous in nocturnal gloom. But this sadness is evoked not alone by indoctrination which is inherently false, but by that which is such relatively. When true teaching is perverted in its application, it has the value of false teaching. This was the fallacy of which Job’s comforters were guilty. They were capable theologians. Their theology was true in its essence, but false in its application. Thereby they made Job’s heart sad with sore sadness. We must study the relativity of truth. Truth misapplied is as untruth. Assurance is a glorious truth, and a radiant possibility for all, but preach it as essential to salvation, and you must make the heart of the righteous sad.

Covet to be an encourager! Strive to uplift the heart of God’s people. Do you ask how you can accomplish this grateful ministry? Speak cheering words. We can hearten the righteous by kindly acts. Eloquent deeds have a sonority which no eloquent speech can attain. A timely gift may fill a sad heart with melody sweeter than an angel’s song. Our very deportment may accomplish the service of God upon sad souls. There is a Gospel in some men’s smile. Faces may be benedictions. Righteousness is the ultimate cure of sadness. Does not this text proclaim that gospel? Character is the final secret of gladness. They who hate evil and do righteousness are anointed with gladness above their fellows. The righteous have a right of gladness. This is especially true in the Christian dispensation. Christian righteousness is realised by faith in the crucified and risen Lord. Such as believe rejoice in the Lord, and this joy none can take from them.